

module one: customer service

Differentiation

article:

When Did Saying “Thank You” Become Hard Work?

by Laurie Guest

Thank you. Somewhere along the line, these two easy words have become hard for people to say. I don't mean the robotic phrase used at the end of a transaction: “Thank you. Have a nice day.” I mean the sincere appreciation that should follow every contract signed or every referral delivered. I am surprised how rare this genuine thank you seems to be.

An appreciation program can be viewed as a stair-step approach. The first level is a verbal thank you at the time of transaction. It is most often a simple sentence used repeatedly: “Thank you for shopping with us.”

The second level is a written thank you. Though not time-consuming, it has a similar sentiment each time. Email counts, but the handwritten note sent by mail is better. This makes sense with professional services more than it does with retail, but I've seen amazing exceptions to that rule. Handwritten notes have gone by the wayside in personal and professional relationships, but it is astonishing how meaningful they can be to someone.

The next level is the appreciation phone call. This is more content-specific to the person you're calling. Pick up that phone, and thank the referral source every time you obtain a new customer who can be traced back to a specific person.

Even higher in appreciation is the token gift. Although it requires an investment, a universal gift works fine. Many companies have a standard item they give to new guests. However, ask yourself if your customer really has a use for a paperweight with your company's logo on it. The money might be better spent on a coffee gift card. If you choose to send a token gift, try to find something that builds a connection with your company.



Finally, we have the top level: a unique gift to the receiver. This requires thought, money, and time; but it can make an amazing impact. My favorite example is a referral gift I sent to an employee of a well-known company. Instead of sending a stock gift, I researched his interests. I looked on Facebook, and I found out he and his wife were big fans of an obscure band. Luckily, that band was coming to the area where he lives. So I reached out to him and said that I would love to treat him and his wife to tickets to this band's concert. He wrote back and was so surprised that I knew he liked this band and graciously accepted the offer. I bought the tickets and sent them to him with a note of thanks. Another referral followed, which was appreciation reciprocated.

No matter what your product or service is, there is room to appreciate your guests. If you're a staff person, focus on your sincerity at level one. Add things like, “We appreciate you choosing to do business with us.” If you're a business owner, you're in a position to put an appreciative campaign in place. I encourage you to have a team meeting to brainstorm ideas and then create a budget for giving thanks. Making an effort to say “thank you” has benefits you will reap for a long time to come.